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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [FR](#) [NATO](#) [RU](#)

SUBJECT: FRANCE AND NATO ID FOR GEORGIA - IT'S ABOUT RUSSIA

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, Reason 1
.4 B/D

1. (C) 1. Summary: A French decision on Georgia's candidacy for NATO Intensified Dialogue is under review, according to Presidency and MFA officials, and President Chirac will have the final say. Based on conversations with an Elysee contact, France continues to view Georgia's future through the prism of Europe's approach to Russia and Russia's relationships with its neighbors. French resistance is also linked to current French reservations about NATO and EU enlargement more generally. MFA and Elysee contacts have emphasized that NATO should evaluate carefully Georgia's candidacy for ID in terms of the benefits Georgian membership would bring to the Alliance, and not in response to pressures from Georgia. End Summary.

2. (C) Polmiloff recently discussed NATO initiatives for Riga separately with Elysee advisor for Strategic Affairs Laurent Bili and MFA Cabinet advisor for Strategic Affairs Francois Carrel-Billiard. Both made it clear that France had yet to take a final position on Georgia's ID candidacy and that such a decision would be made by President Chirac, who is personally engaged on all questions pertaining to the future of Europe.

3. (C) Bili conceded our arguments that, judged on substance alone, Georgia was on track for ID. He emphasized, however, that a key consideration for France would be how Russia would react to the establishment of closer links between NATO and Georgia. Applying Russia-first logic, he stated that Russia had not made as much progress internally as the West might have hoped. It was therefore important that the U.S. and Europe proceed carefully and not allow Russia to use its differences with its near neighbors, such as Georgia and Ukraine, as an excuse to backtrack on its own reforms. Additionally, Bili argued there was a danger that in response to NATO's pushing for closer links with Georgia, Russia might become less willing to find a way forward on resolving the frozen conflicts in its region.

4. (C) Along similar lines, Carrel-Billiard admitted that the Alliance could not allow Russia to dictate its membership, but added that a case could be made for taking a less confrontational approach with the Russians. We countered that previous NATO expansion efforts with Poland and the Baltic states had ultimately proven to be the right decision and non-threatening to Russia. Carrel-Billiard took the point, but emphasized that from a Russian perspective, Georgia and Ukraine were far more critical to Russia's interests.

5. (C) Carrel-Billiard also noted that ID status was the first step leading to NATO accession, and hence enlargement of the Alliance. History had shown that NATO membership had tracked with EU accession, hence it was important to closely weigh the benefits new members would bring to the Alliance. He observed that Poland and Romania, for instance, had provided significant contributions to the Alliance, but it was far less clear what Georgia would add. The adverse outcomes of the 2005 referenda in France and in the Netherlands showed that the jury was still out in France and in other countries in Europe on the nature of a future Europe.

6. (C) Carrel-Billiard and Bili cautioned against rushing an Alliance decision on ID for Georgia. They readily conceded that decisions on ID status and MAP were performance-based. However, Bili said France saw no urgency in pushing for a quick decision, especially as the Georgians then could be expected to push harder for a political decision on the next steps forward, further complicating Europe's handling of Russia. Carrel-Billiard advised that the MFA could agree to ID for Georgia by Riga, but wishes to keep the matter open for now.

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